

## **HLPF 2020**

### ***Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.***

#### **Theme 6: Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation**

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**Co-convenors:** UN-DESA, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UNECE and UNESCAP

**Corresponding GSDR Entry point:** Urban and peri-urban development

**Specific lens:** COVID-19 impact and responses

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Please provide written inputs to the following questions:

1. How can transparent urban planning and design help in creating inclusive access to housing, basic services and infrastructure, environmental sustainability, improved air and water quality, and healthier communities?

The way cities are planned and developed are not neutral and can reduce or exacerbate social and gender inequalities. Integrating a gender perspective in urban planning and design has long-lasting impacts on women's and girls' access to public services and infrastructure, land rights and housing, mobility and safety in urban spaces, as well as health and resilience. As women are often the food producers, educators of their children, caregivers for their families and community managers,<sup>1</sup> achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women will make a crucial contribution to sustainable urban development and economic growth.

There is increased recognition by different stakeholders of the importance of inclusive land use and planning design of urban spaces. Gender-responsive urban planning can address the spatial, social and symbolic exclusion and discrimination generated by neutral planning. The separation of public and private spaces and inadequate infrastructure reinforce the time and energy burdens of unpaid care and domestic work, which is primarily done by women and girls. The lack of clean energy and water and inadequate sanitation facilities can also create severe health and hygiene issues for women and girls, such as respiratory problems from indoor air pollution caused by cooking with dirty fuel. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of sanitation and hygiene practices; however, in low- and middle-income countries, women are over-represented in urban slums and carry the burden of water collection. For millions of women and girls, this reality increases the health risks and the additional risk of sexual violence due to poor WASH access. Poor infrastructure and lack of safety can further limit women's and girls' mobility, which links to limited access to education and employment as well as to greater risks during environmental disasters. Moreover, women's under-representation in urban planning and design compounded with their lack of or limited social and economic inclusion, including lack of secure tenure, perpetuates gender discrimination in urban and peri-urban areas. Urban policies should prioritize everyday lived experiences of marginalized women in planning decisions, create space for diverse women and girls to participate in every phase of the urban planning process, and promote mixed-use neighborhoods and accessible service provision taking into account women's needs.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://unctad.org/en/Docs/ecn162011crp3\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/Docs/ecn162011crp3_en.pdf)

Targeted measures are thus necessary to increase women's voices, participation and leadership in urban and transport planning and design fields, including architecture and engineering, as well as in local and national decision-making processes. This will ensure gender-responsive urban policies, plans and projects that take into account diverse women's and girls' needs in urban areas. In addition to participatory processes that actively engage women, transparent, inclusive and gender-responsive urban planning and design entails gender impact assessments of policies and projects, gender-responsive budgeting, and the collection and use disaggregated data.

2. How can transparent urban and territorial planning and development support economic growth which is diverse, balanced, inclusive, safe, green and sustainable?

Currently, more than half the world's population (55 per cent) live in urban areas, and this figure is projected to reach 68 per cent by 2050.<sup>2</sup> Women from rural areas migrate to urban areas for various economic and social reasons, including to seek job opportunities, such as in the urban manufacturing sector or in private households as domestic workers and caregivers; to avoid disadvantage in land ownership and inheritance; and to escape cultural and physical restrictions, early and forced marriage and other forms of violence against women in the family. Data from 61 low- and middle-income countries show that, across a diverse set of outcomes (such as education, modern contraception, household decision-making), women living in urban settings do better on average than women in rural areas.<sup>3</sup> Urban settings can provide the opportunity for a better life, particularly with respect to gains in access to higher paid work, education and proximity to essential services. However, often these gains are unequally distributed and social and physical barriers often confine new urban dwellers, especially women, to a life of poverty, with substandard housing conditions, inadequate access to public services and insecure property rights. According to the ILO, limited access to and safety of transportation is estimated to be the greatest obstacle to women's participation in the labor market in developing countries, reducing their participation probability by 16.5 percentage points. Women in slums are worse off than their male slum and female non-slum counterparts across a broad range of outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

Gender equality is crucial for sustainable urbanization and economic growth. Access to essential services and social infrastructure, along with tenure security, education and employment opportunities, can help women pull themselves and their families out of poverty. Access to sustainable and safe physical infrastructure, including clean and accessible WASH facilities, reliable renewable energy sources, and affordable and safe public transport systems and walkways, that are designed to meet women's and girls' needs can have multiplier effects on their practical access to education, work and skills-building opportunities.<sup>5</sup> Provision of affordable care and health services and facilities for dependents also significantly contribute to enhancing employment opportunities for women. Moreover, women in urban settings face steep barriers in exercising their housing rights. Eliminating discriminatory marriage and inheritance laws can expand women's ownership of and control over assets, including land and housing. Legal protections for women's housing rights and provision of social housing are critical. Security of tenure

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/harsh-realities-marginalized-women-in-cities-of-the-developing-world-en.pdf?la=en&vs=747>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

can further generate income, facilitate access to financial resources and decrease risks of gender-based violence.

Closing the gender gap in labour markets could produce as much as \$28 trillion – 26% – in annual GDP worldwide by 2025.<sup>6</sup> Implementation strategies of urban and territorial planning and development must be inclusive and provide women with economic development opportunities, such as priority in procurement and contracting procedures, and financing mechanisms.<sup>7</sup> Efforts should also be made to channel resources to underserved communities due to the feminization of urban poverty. The New Urban Agenda recognizes the contribution of the working poor in the informal economy, particularly women, and calls for the enhancement of ‘their livelihoods, working conditions and income security, legal and social protection, access to skills, assets and other support services, and voice and representation.’ Good practices include laws in India that establish legal status for street vendors and mandate their involvement in local government planning processes, while in Colombia, organizations of informal waste-pickers won the right to be included in municipal sanitation planning, recognized as public service providers and entitled to be paid fixed rates based on formal contracts.<sup>8</sup>

3. Which kinds of policies, plans, governance, investments and partnerships can help create transparent, inclusive, healthier and safer cities and communities that are able to withstand destabilizing effects of negative social phenomena, such as corruption, drug and illicit firearms trafficking and terrorism, unregulated migration, lack of access to public goods, widespread public protests etc.?

Corruption, organized crime, illicit trafficking and terrorism impede sustainable development and further marginalize groups in vulnerable situations, such as women and girls living in poverty, including by limiting access to and resources for basic public services and goods and by increasing risks of gender-based violence. Organized crime, including the illicit trafficking in drugs, persons and firearms, fuels violence, corruption and income inequality, which inhibit social and economic activity and undermine gender equality and women’s empowerment.

More inclusive government institutions, including justice and security bodies, are essential to create the stronger accountability mechanisms and legal enforcement necessary to tackle these negative social phenomena. Gender perspectives must be mainstreamed in all interventions and throughout the justice and security sectors to address the differential impacts on women and men. Further actions are needed to eliminate discrimination against women and uphold women’s rights during the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of cases and in delivering assistance to victims. Higher levels of women’s participation in public life are associated with better governance and lower levels of corruption in many countries.<sup>9</sup> Currently, however, only 36% of elected seats in local deliberative bodies, globally, are held by women.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, research shows that equal participation by women in security services ensures

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<sup>6</sup> World Bank (2020), [“Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design”](#)

<sup>7</sup> World Bank (2020), [“Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design”](#)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2018/un-women-policy-brief-10-rights-of-women-in-informal-self-employment-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5824>

<sup>9</sup> UNODC (2020), [“Gender Brief for UNODC Staff: Mainstreaming Gender in Corruption projects / programmes”](#)

<sup>10</sup> SDG database (2019) <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>

that those platforms are more responsive to the diverse needs of the community, yet it is estimated that women make up only 11% of police forces worldwide.<sup>11</sup>

4. What is the role of science, technology, communication and innovation in the transformation to sustainable and equitable urban systems, which also incorporate and address informality and help overcome the digital divide?

The transformation to sustainable and equitable urban systems cannot be achieved without realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women. STI can contribute to women's livelihoods and development activities as women and girls play prominent roles in a range of sectors (such as water, energy, transport and agriculture) for various productive, consumptive and domestic purposes.<sup>12</sup> For example, technology has the potential to improve women's and girls' situation by addressing care responsibilities through inclusive infrastructure (e.g., accessible childcare facilities, increased safe access to energy sources and public provision of water). In particular, digital technology is changing the way people communicate and inform themselves, affecting governance systems, including the way in which social protection and public services are delivered, and generating unprecedented amounts of data.<sup>13</sup> For example, mobile phone technologies have been found to benefit women in accessing information, online banking and economic opportunities and facilitating their collective action.<sup>14</sup> Technological innovation and the proliferation of digital platforms, in both developed and developing countries, could create new opportunities for women and girls in urban areas, including with regard to their participation in public life, economic empowerment, educational advancement, access to health and social protection, and freedom from violence.<sup>15</sup>

Particularly for informal workers in urban areas, local authorities and municipalities operate as a kind of proxy employer that provides use of public space, occupation health and safety programmes, and enabling urban infrastructure, thus promoting their inclusion, safety and well-being.<sup>16</sup> Greater access to STI resources is critical for women in insecure, informal employment in urban areas. It can improve their working conditions (e.g., remote work, improved equipment) and access to essential services and infrastructure and further lead to better educational and economic opportunities, which can help informal workers move into formal employment and have greater access to social protection mechanisms and stronger legal protections. Technology can improve women's safety in public markets and streets, including better lighting, cleanliness, visibility and access to assistance. Greater access to education, capital and markets through STI can also improve their livelihoods, including through support in entrepreneurial development.

However, gender-blind research and innovation both reflect and perpetuate the under-representation of women in STI fields, particularly at senior levels, and the gender digital divide.

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<sup>11</sup> UNODC (2020), "[Gender Brief for UNODC Staff: Mainstreaming Gender in Terrorism Prevention projects / programmes](#)"

<sup>12</sup> [https://unctad.org/en/Docs/ecn162011crp3\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/Docs/ecn162011crp3_en.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2020/4>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2018/un-women-policy-brief-10-rights-of-women-in-informal-self-employment-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5824>

Growing evidence suggest that diversity improves the quality of research and the relevance of its outcomes for society,<sup>17</sup> however, research priorities and design are largely developed by men and may fail to consider gender perspectives. The lack of gender perspectives when translating scientific knowledge into products or actions can fail to address women’s interests and even be harmful to them.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, inequalities in access to digital technologies and men’s control over women’s use of ICTs continue to persist.

To increase women’s leadership in STI fields and ensure their needs are met in urban development, targeted policies are necessary to eliminate gender stereotypes and bias at home and at work. Greater access to the productive resources, such as property/land, finance, technology (including access and ownership of ICTs) and education, is necessary to support women’s engagement in STI. Moreover, women’s productive activities must be adequately supported by technology and resources. The public and private sectors must also address women’s disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work, such as through flexible work arrangements, parental leave and childcare facilities, to help create an enabling environment for women researchers and prevent many women from choosing part-time or informal work. Targeted action is also needed to ensure that technological developments, including artificial intelligence, algorithms and machine learning, do not reproduce or exacerbate pre-existing inequalities, particularly for women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of inequalities and discrimination.

5. How can local and national governments work together to ensure adequate resources are available for sustainable, inclusive, safe and transparent urban development? How can local government financing be made more predictable and robust?

Local and national governments can work together to tackle structural inequalities and reorient spending priorities in support of the realization of the 2030 Agenda, including through investments in education, health, childcare, infrastructure and climate resilience. Tax is the primary redistributive instrument governments have to reduce inequalities, yet different types of taxes have very different distributional outcomes across lines of race, class and gender. Global tax trends over the last 30 years show consumption and sales taxes (which have the heaviest impact on the poorest people) are on the rise, while corporate tax rates, rates of income tax on the highest earners, and property/wealth taxes have dipped steadily lower. A gender-responsive and equity-driven approach to taxation also needs to look at cross-border tax abuse, tax havens, and the race-to-the-bottom in corporate tax rates and tax incentives. Efforts to mobilize domestic resources in developing countries are undermined by existing financial secrecy, tax, trade and investment rules which limits the ability of governments to raise revenue to provide the services, infrastructure and public goods that are critical to support the realization of the SDGs and gender equality.

Local and national tax systems should be reformed so that they are progressive and gender-responsive. This includes more stringent taxation of wealth, assets and inheritances while reducing the dependence on sales and consumption taxes that place a disproportionate burden on the poor. It is necessary for governments to increase marginal tax rates on the income of the highest earners and on corporations and

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<sup>17</sup> OECD (2018), “[OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2018](#)”

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

end tax incentives for multinational corporations. Municipal bonds and loans from lending banks, government-owned financial institutions and development agencies can also provide sources of financing for local governments.<sup>19</sup> Local and national governments also have a role to play in increasing the provision of durable and adequate housing and equitable access to land,<sup>20</sup> which can unlock women's access to financing.

Local and national governments can facilitate conducive institutional arrangements and processes to ensure gender-responsive budgeting and resource allocation at all stages, from the outset of planning processes, including requirements for the integration of a gender perspective in local and national planning processes so as to achieve greater policy coherence and coordination among different agencies and ministries. It is important to engage gender machineries at local and national levels in the development of sustainable, inclusive, safe and transparent urban development policies. Measures such as legislated gender quotas, dedicated funding and capacity-building can strengthen women's participation and decision-making in local and national governance and financial institutions. Local and national governments should engage women's community organizations in the decision-making processes, gender responsive budgets and monitoring and evaluation strategies to include women's voices and priorities in municipal plans and budget.

6. How can urban, peri-urban and rural areas be connected through infrastructure that is resilient and integrated with transparent, urban and territorial development plans, focusing on access, affordability, inclusivity, resource-efficiency and innovation?

Urban and territorial development strategies require an integrated approach to promote positive economic social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas. Urban and rural areas are inextricably linked with constant flows of people, capital, goods, services, natural resources, technology and information between them. Enhancing urban-rural linkages requires plans and investments to strengthen connectivity, most notably through infrastructure development, including telecommunications, energy and transport. Sustainable infrastructure that connects rural areas and urban markets can promote more balanced social and economic development, greater opportunities for employment and improved accessibility to essential services and information, while reducing environmental damage. Targeted policies and investments in infrastructure development in small and intermediate cities and towns, including strengthened connectivity to rural areas, can contribute to diversification of rural economies and effective trade links of small-scale producers to local, national, regional and global value chains and markets, as well as increased productivity and roles of small urban centres and greater accessibility to housing and essential services. The decentralization of economic activity, basic services and infrastructure from megacities can further help address problems of urbanization such as congestion and overcrowding, higher costs of living and environmental costs, as well as reduce the sprawl of slums on the outskirts of large urban centres.

Sustainable, gender-responsive and climate-resilient infrastructure is crucial for strengthening connectivity. Gender analysis should be undertaken during project development and design, and

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<sup>19</sup> [https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Urban%20Rural%20Linkages%20for%20implementing%20the%20New%20Urban%20Agenda\\_08112017.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Urban%20Rural%20Linkages%20for%20implementing%20the%20New%20Urban%20Agenda_08112017.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/harsh-realities-marginalized-women-in-cities-of-the-developing-world-en.pdf?la=en&vs=747>

throughout the project lifecycle, and include gender-specific priorities, needs and usage of different facilities (e.g., water, energy, transport or health facilities) as well as environmental objectives.<sup>21</sup> Policymakers and planners should also give due consideration to social infrastructure, including investments in the care economy and health systems. Gender-responsive procurement policies and budgeting contribute to integrating a gender perspective in infrastructure projects. The systematic collection of disaggregated data<sup>22</sup> on access to and use of infrastructure by type (e.g., transportation, energy, water and sanitation, digital, safety and resilience, financial, health, education, culture, green spaces) is critical to inform urban and territorial development plans and infrastructure project planning and design.<sup>23</sup> Greater representation of women in public decision-making positions along the infrastructure investment cycle and in infrastructure companies can ensure that infrastructure projects take into account the different needs and use of infrastructure by different groups of women and men, as well as environmental considerations. Global evidence suggests that women are the main users of low-carbon transportation, making a higher proportion of the trips on foot and on public transport. It is important to include women's voices in climate change agendas and urban development plans and channel resources and technology to safe low-carbon mobility with the potential to improve women's freedom of movement while reducing emissions.

Each question will be examined from the lens of Policies, actions and trade-offs; Leaving no one behind; Knowledge gaps; Means of implementation and partnerships; and science, technology and innovation.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/gov/gender-mainstreaming/gender-equality-and-sustainable-infrastructure-7-march-2019.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/sdg-report> and <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2019>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.